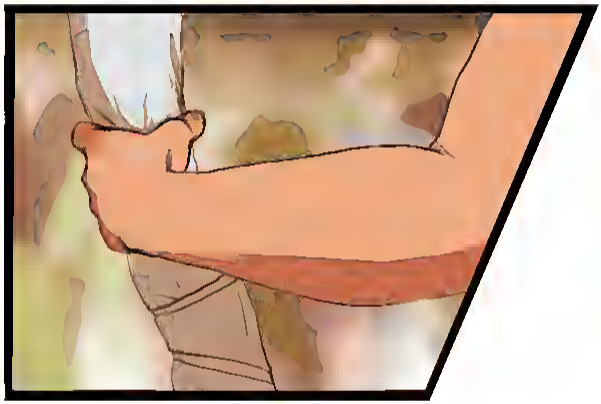
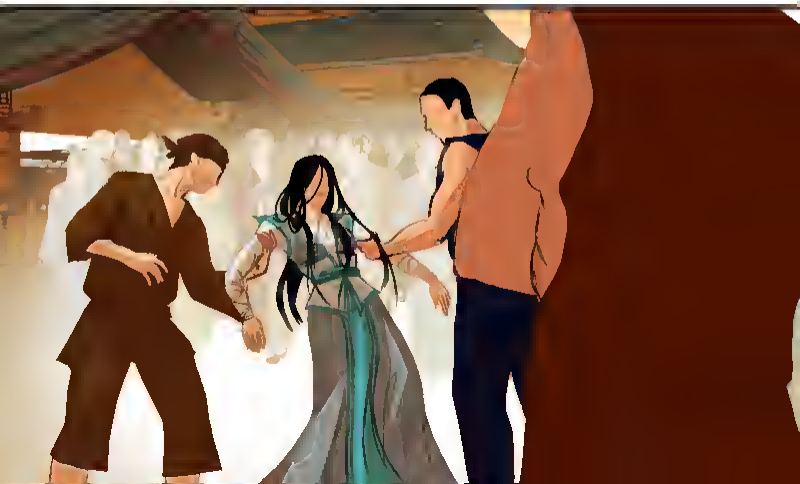
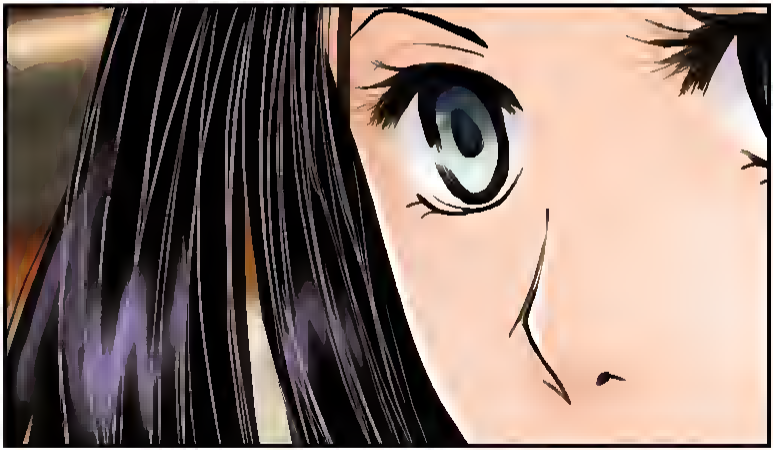
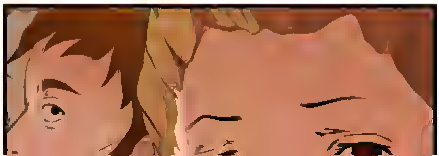
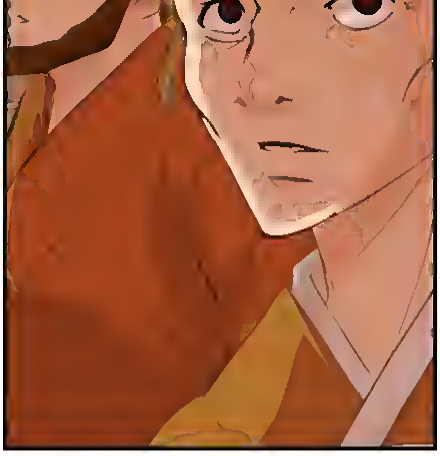




WELL, WELL...
YOU MUST REALLY BE AN IDIOT TO CHALLENGE ME LIKE THIS, WOMAN.

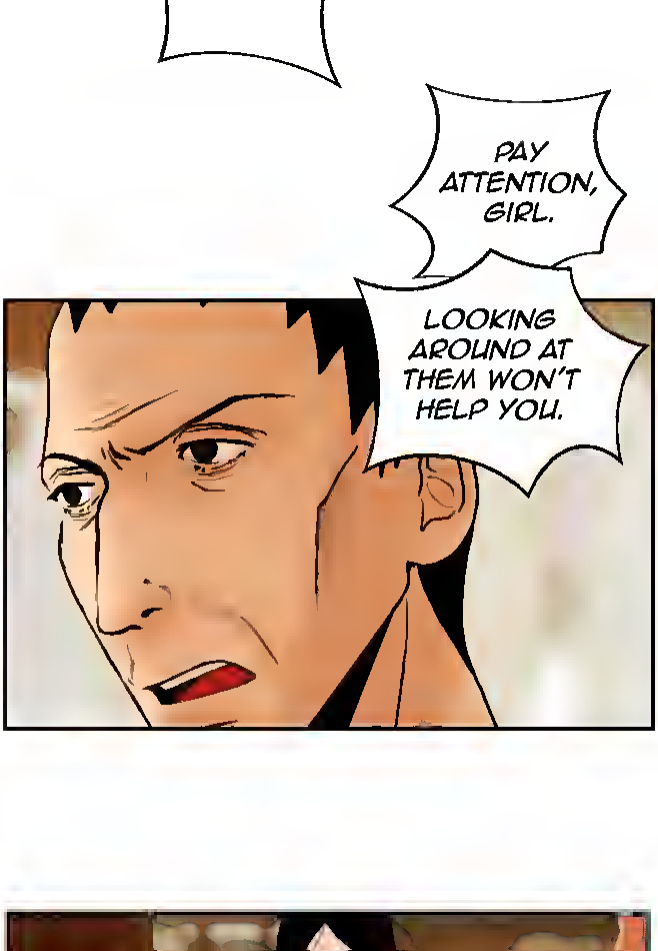






NO... NOT YET....

HEY!!


PAY ATTENTION, GIRL.
LOOKING AROUND AT THEM WON'T HELP YOU.

NOBODY IN THIS TOWN WILL DO A THING TO STOP ME.
...AND WHY WOULD THEY?

THIS TOWN HAS BEEN COWERING UNDER THE BLOOD KING AND HIS FATHER BEFORE HIM FOR YEARS.
IT'S LAUGHABLE.
THIS KINGDOM HAS ONLY EVER KNOWN WAR, BLOOD, AND DEATH.

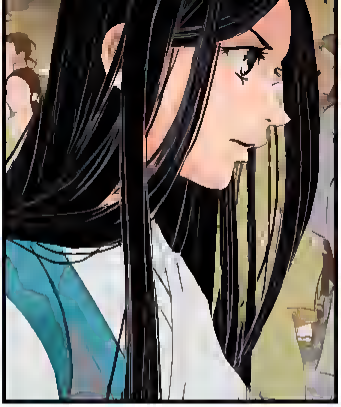
SO, WHAT CAN YOU REALLY EXPECT OF THOSE WHO SERVE HIM?

KILLING IS OUR SPECIALTY. THE WEAK WILL ALWAYS LOSE OUT TO THE ONES WHO HOLD THE POWER.

MY MEN AND I... WE RULE THIS CAPITOL. WE DECIDE WHO LIVES AND WHO DIES.

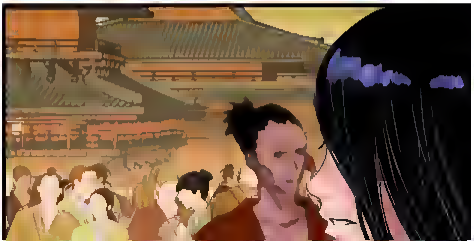
NO ONE IS STRONG ENOUGH TO STOP US.

NOT THE BLOOD KING OR ANY OF HIS WEAKLING SOLDIERS.



HIS ARMY IS PATHETIC COMPARED TO MY STRENGTH AND SKILL.

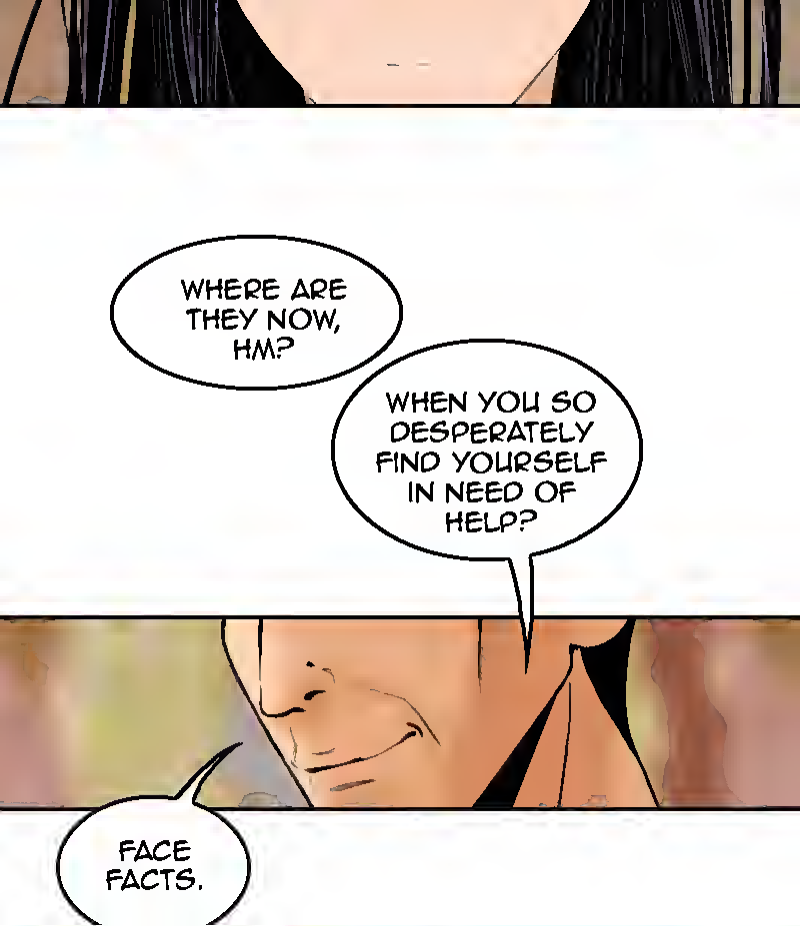
AND EVEN IF HIS MEN WERE STRONG ENOUGH TO FIGHT ME, THEY'RE TOO COWARDLY TO EVEN LIFT A FINGER.



THERE ARE NO HEROES HERE FOR YOU.
THE BLOOD KING IS

CERTAINLY NO SAVIOR.

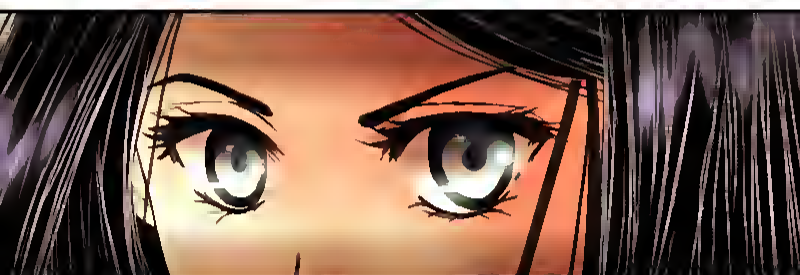
AND HIS WORTHLESS SOLDIERS ARE NO BETTER.


WHERE ARE THEY NOW, HM?
WHEN YOU SO DESPERATELY FIND YOURSELF IN NEED OF HELP?
FACE FACTS.

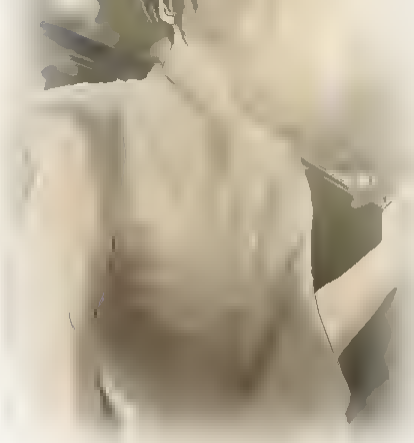
YOU'RE GONNA DIE HERE BECAUSE YOU THOUGHT IT WISE TO CHALLENGE THE LIKES OF ME.
THE BLOOD

SAVE YOU.

HIS **HAPLESS** SOLDIERS WOULDN'T EVEN INTERVENE FOR SOMEONE AS WORTHLESS AS YOU.



IF THEY CARED THEY'D STOP ME FROM MAKING AN EXAMPLE OF YOU.
BUT, THEY'RE ALL WEAK, PATHETIC, COWARDS...

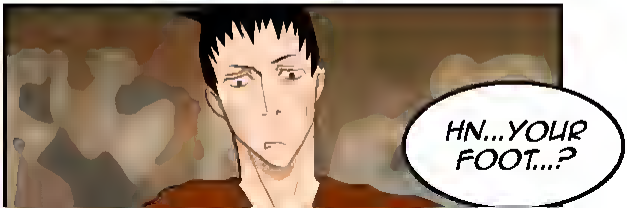


...THEY DON'T CARE ABOUT YOUR FATE OR ANYONE'S.

...THEY JUST WANNA LINE THEIR POCKETS WITH GOLD.

HAHAHA!

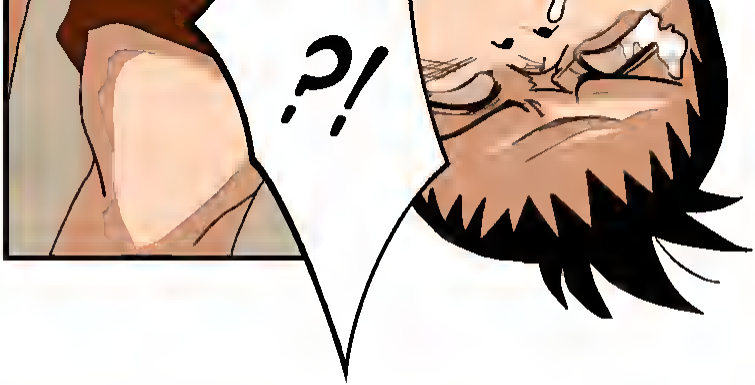
...LIKE THEIR KING...



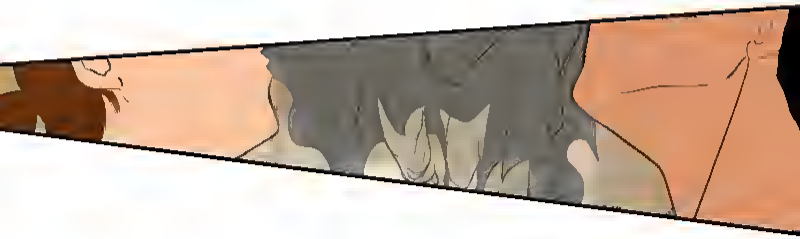
HN...YOUR FOOT...?

B

AK



NOW IS THE TIME!



DON'T JUST STAND THERE LIKE IDIOTS!!
SHE'S GETTING AWAY!!!

TPP
TPP
TPP
TPP

TPP
TPP

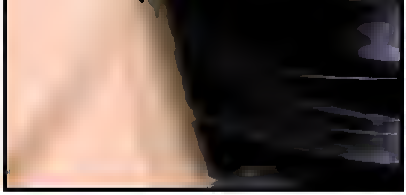
TPP
TPP

TPP
TPP

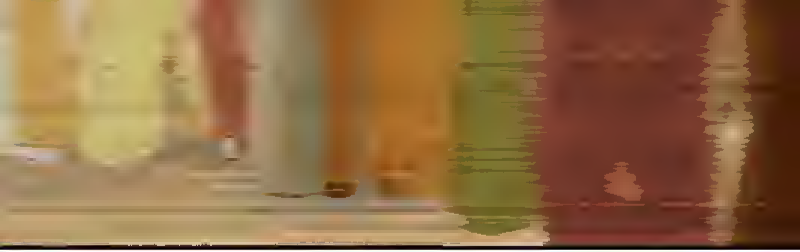
TPP
TPP

STOP RUNNING AWAY, COWARD!
GET BACK HERE!!!

IT'S NOT THESE SMALL FRIES I SHOULD BE CONCENTRATING ON.



...HOWEVER...

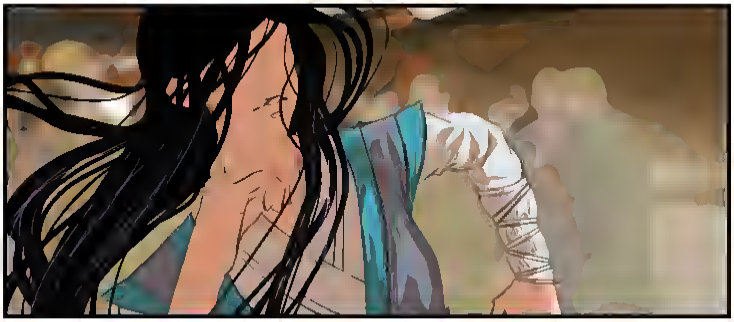


...SEEMS LIKE IT'S DIFFICULT FOR ME TO PINPOINT MY FOLLOWER...

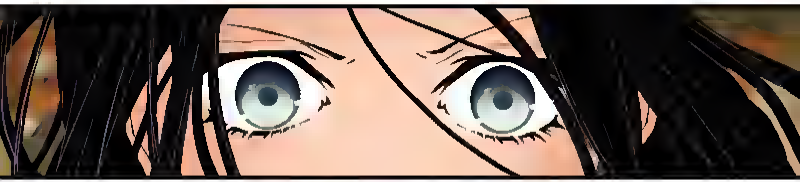
COME
BACK!!

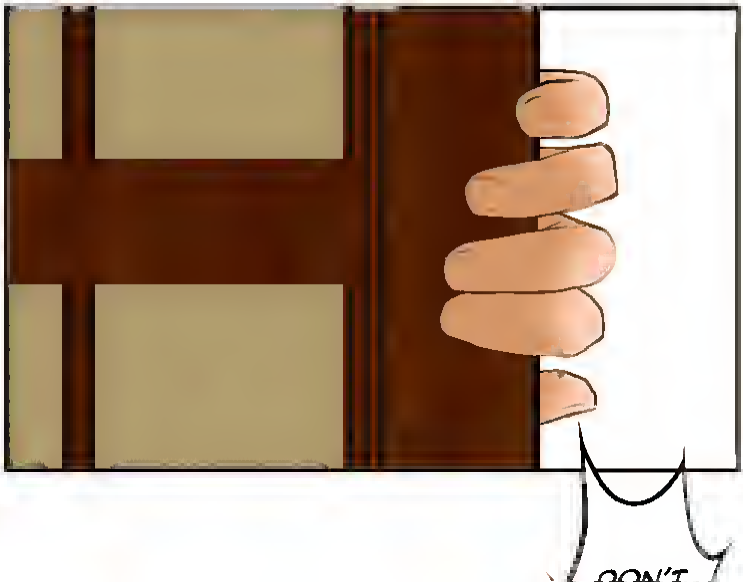
SHE'S TOO FAST!

REGARDLESS...

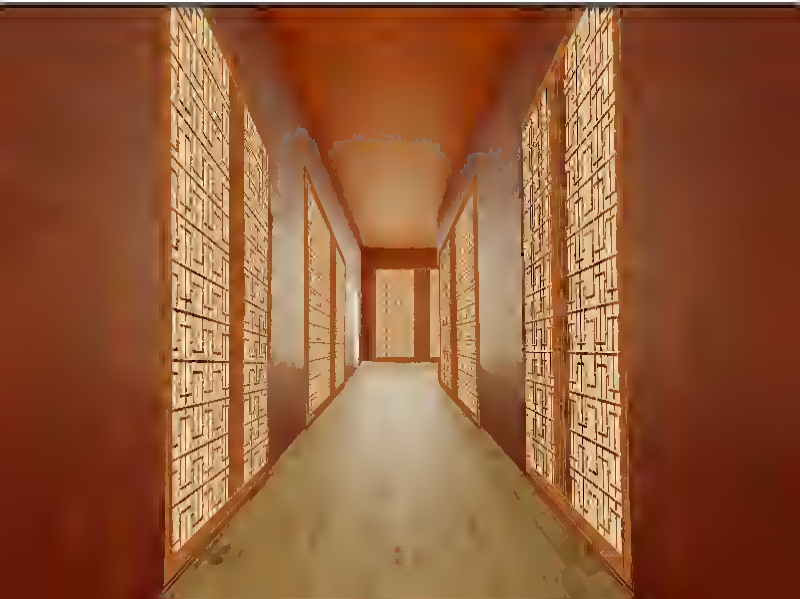


...I WON'T LET IT CLOUD MY JUDGMENT LIKE LAST TIME.

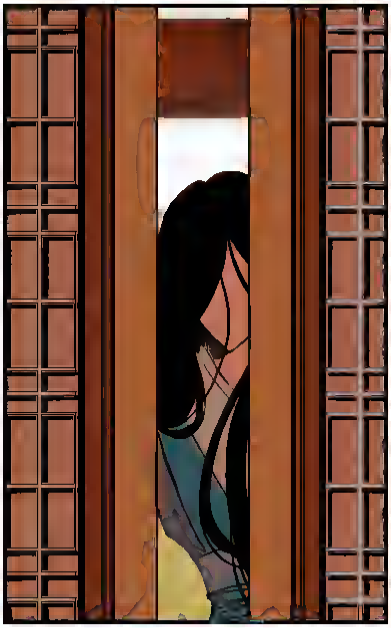



DON'T

LOSE HER!!
CHECK THAT INN!



FWSHH

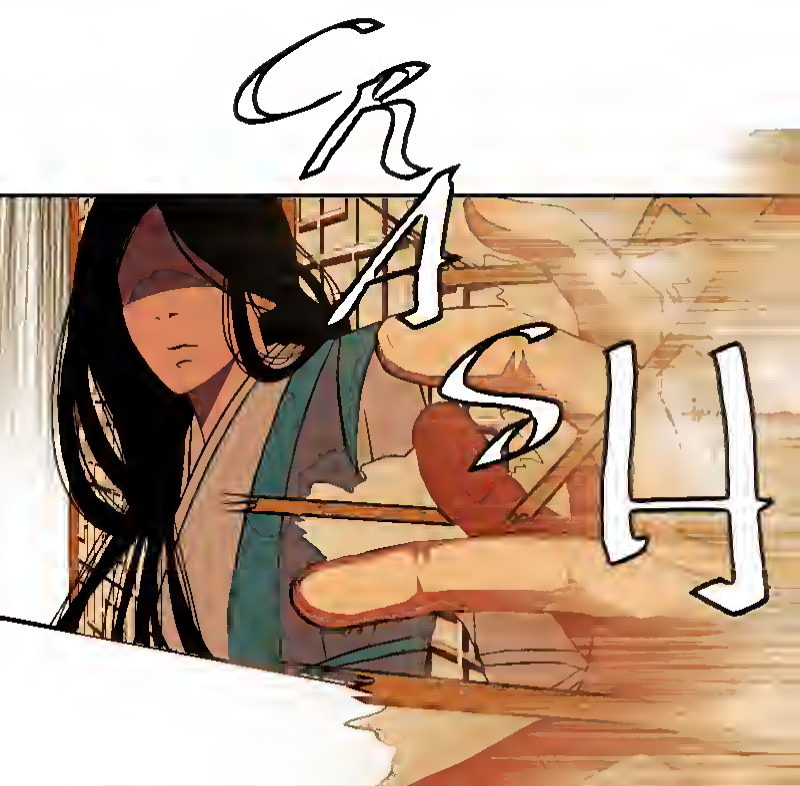


TPP
TPP

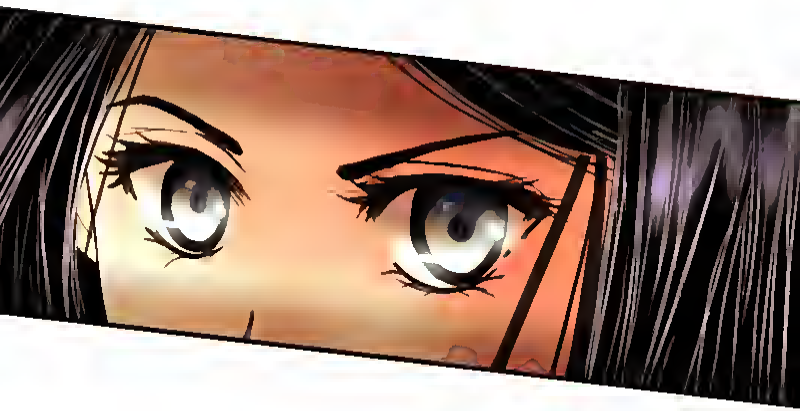
TPP

TPP
TPP

3... 2...



NOW!



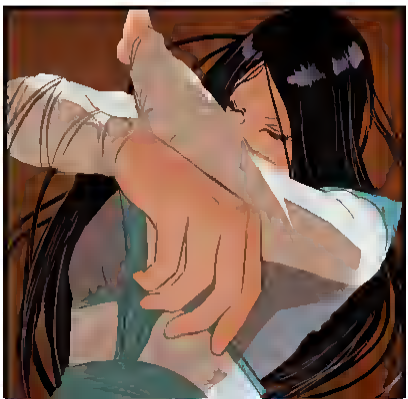
AGH!!

BWAK

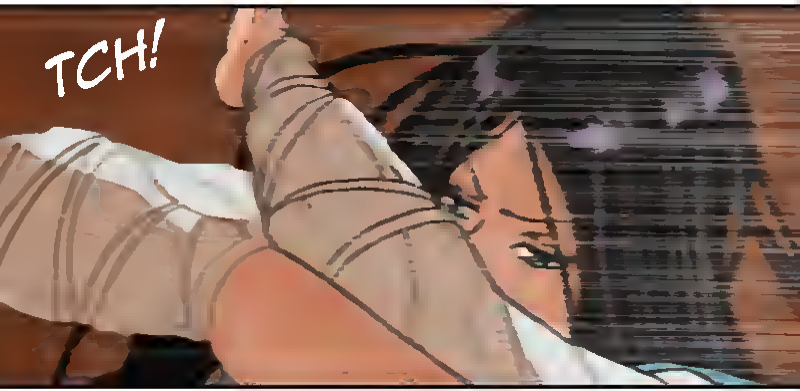
HE'S A PERSISTENT ONE.

WHILE THIS FLAILING AROUND OF HIS WON'T REACH ME...

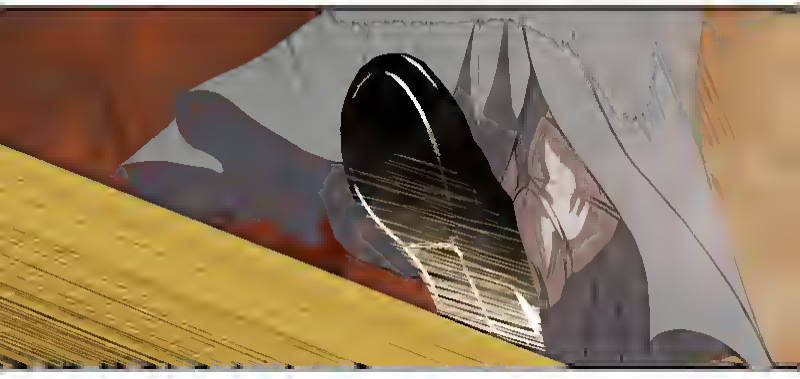
HEH! YOU SCARED?!!



...I HEAR ANOTHER PERSON APPROACHING...



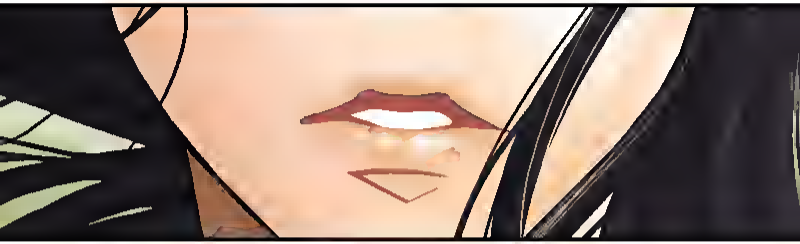
IT'S A LITTLE DIFFERENT...

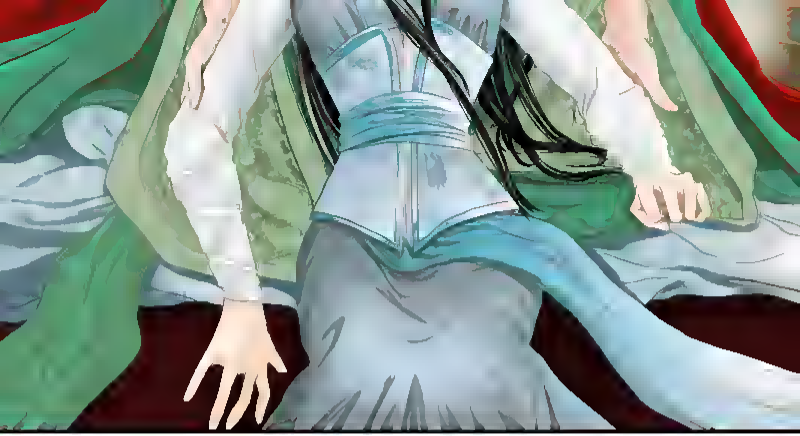


...COULD IT BE...?

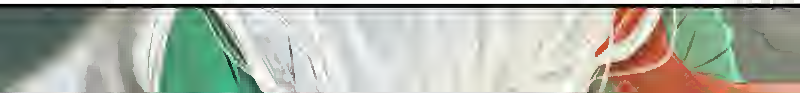
CRASH

?!

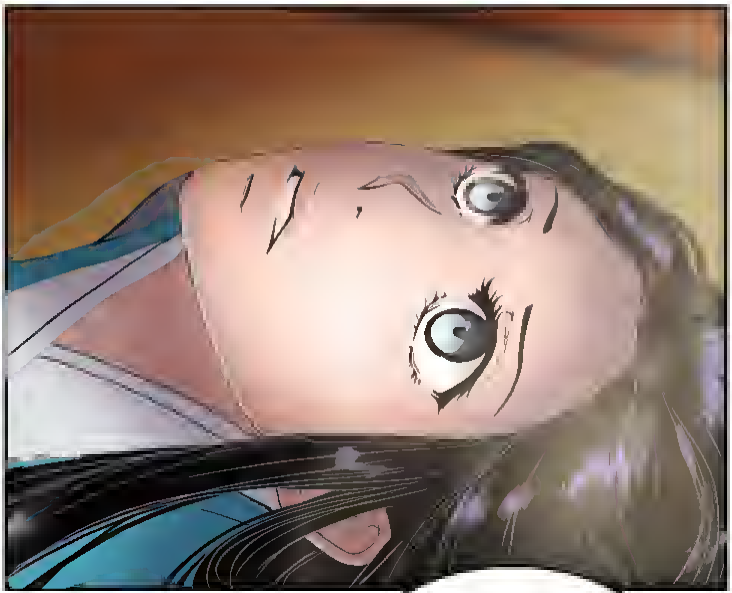


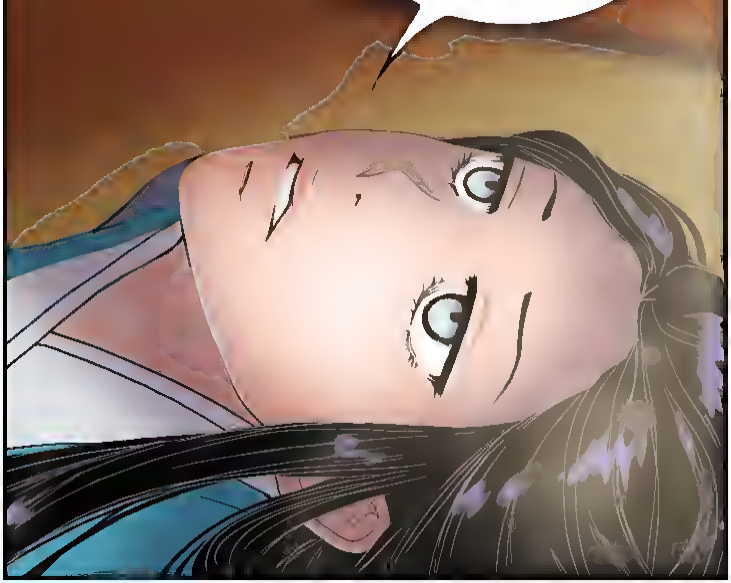


NOW...



WHO...


YOU KNOW... THERE WERE 2 POSSIBILITIES I WAS NOT HOPING FOR.



...I'M SURE YOU KNOW IF YOU ARE ONE OF THOSE TWO.

STAND UP, WENCH!!!

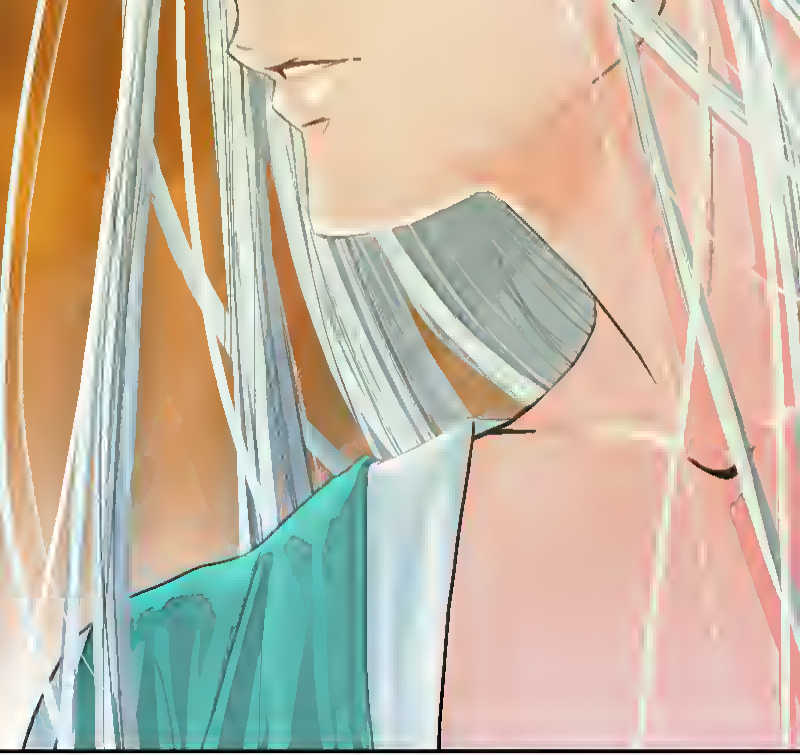
AND WHO ARE YOU?!!

WELL ...

...AREN'T YOU GOING TO ANSWER HIM?

...OR...

...IS THIS GOING TO BECOME ANOTHER "LIFE LESSON" OF HOW I OUGHT TO STAY OUT OF TROUBLE?

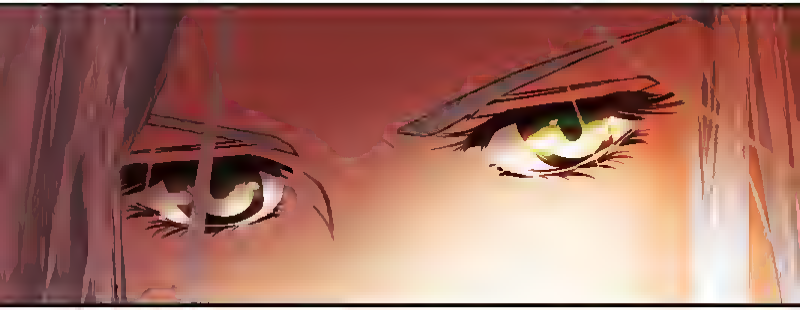


STOP IGNORING ME, FOOLS!

SHI

THWAK
?!!

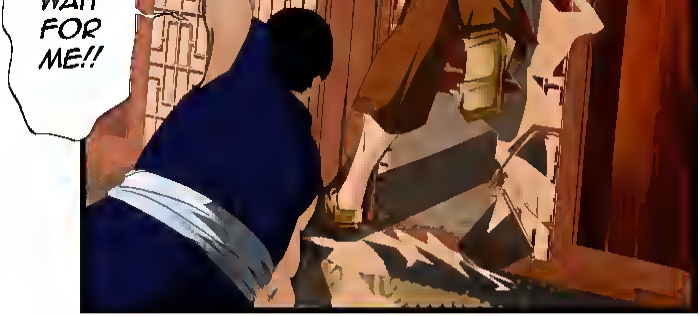
THAT WAS A WARNING.



THE NEXT ONE WILL GO THROUGH YOU

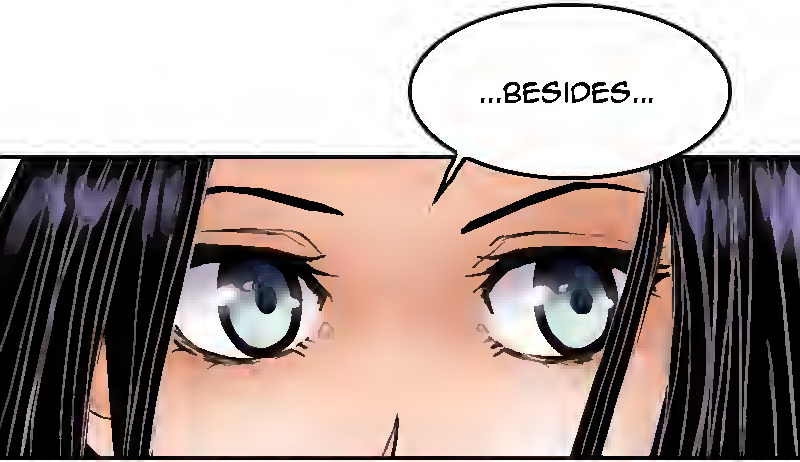
HEAD.
IT'S UP TO YOU IF YOU WANT TO STICK AROUND.

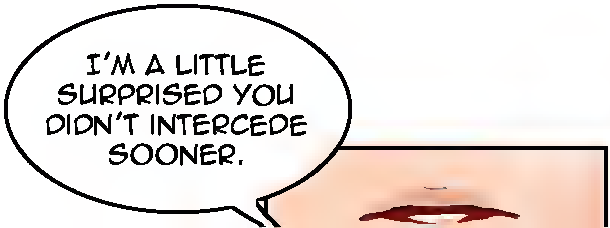
Y-YOU HAVEN'T SEEN THE LAST OF ME!!!

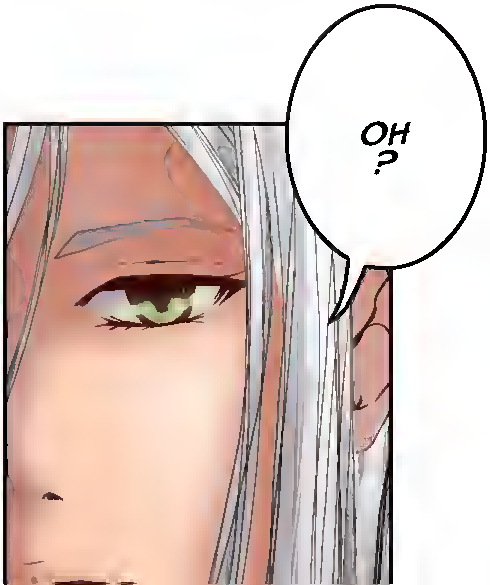

WAIT FOR ME!!

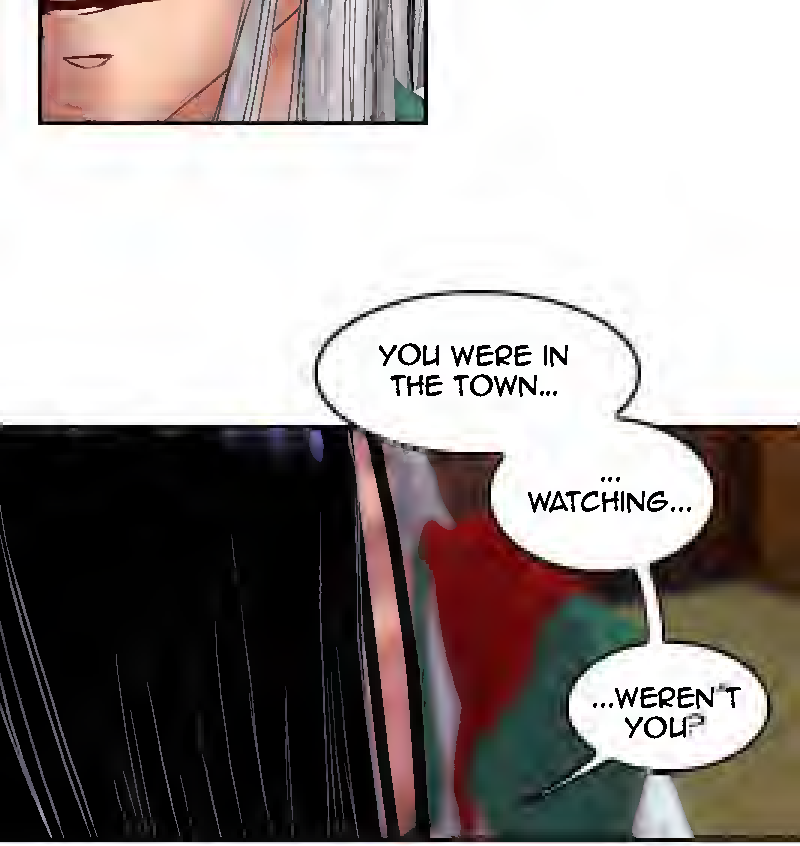
ARE YOU GOING TO REMAIN IN MY LAP ALL DAY?

IT WASN'T LIKE I INTENDED TO LAND INTO YOUR LAP.
PLUS, YOU HELD ME THERE.

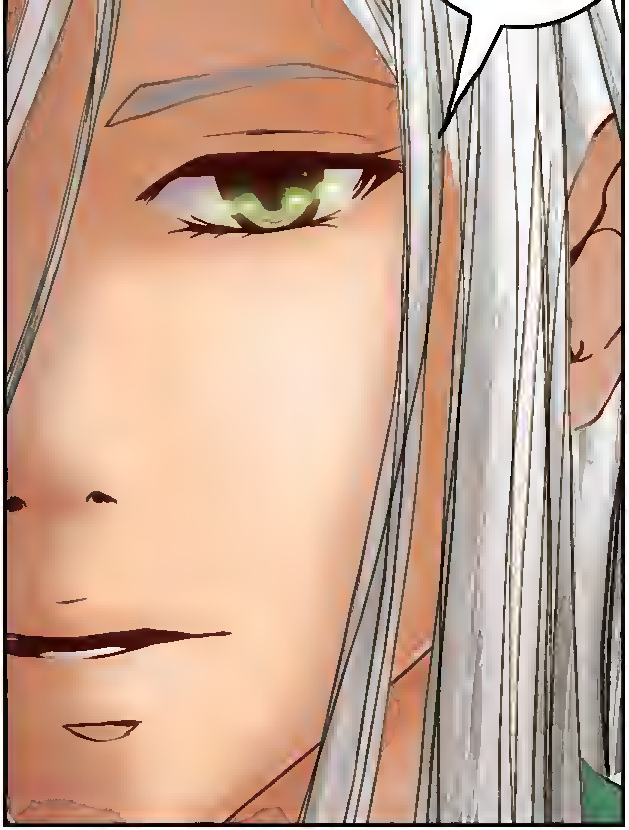

...BESIDES...

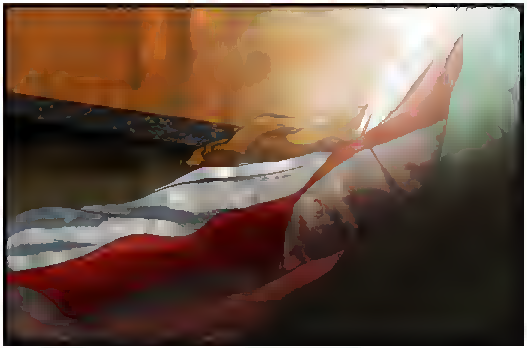

I'M A LITTLE SURPRISED YOU DIDN'T INTERCEDE SOONER.


OH
?


YOU WERE IN THE TOWN...
...
WATCHING...
...WEREN'T YOU?

I AM CURIOUS TO KNOW HOW YOU CAME TO THAT CONCLUSION.



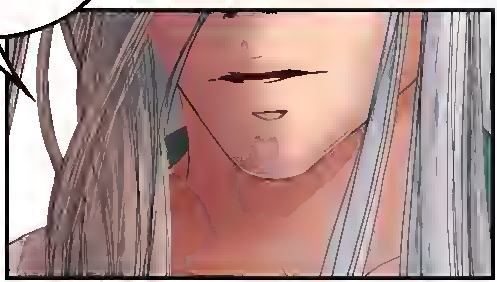


I WAS TRYING TO FIGURE OUT WHY I WAS BEING WATCHED...

...DISPOSE

OF ME?

...WHICH YOU FIGURED THAT IT WASN'T...



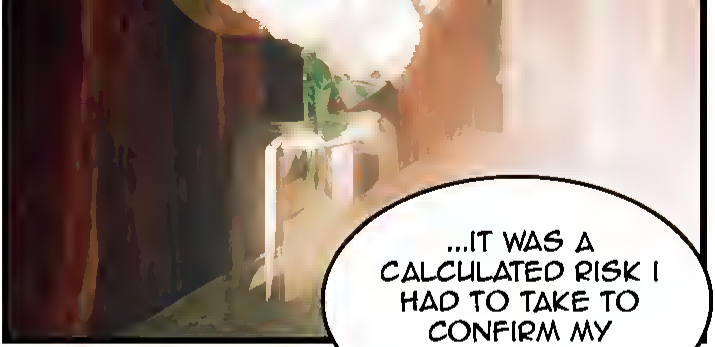
...SINCE, IF YOU WERE TO BE DISPOSED OF, IT WOULD'VE BEEN DONE ALREADY.

CLEARLY...
REGARDLESS, I CAN'T DISCOUNT THE POSSIBILITY THAT SOMEONE MAY WANT ME DEAD.

THOUGH, IT APPEARS THAT THERE ARE MORE INTERESTED IN KEEPING ME ALIVE.
THE REASONS WHY... AT LEAST AS FAR AS I CAN GUESS... APPEAR TO BE LINKED WITH THE KING.

IS THAT SO?

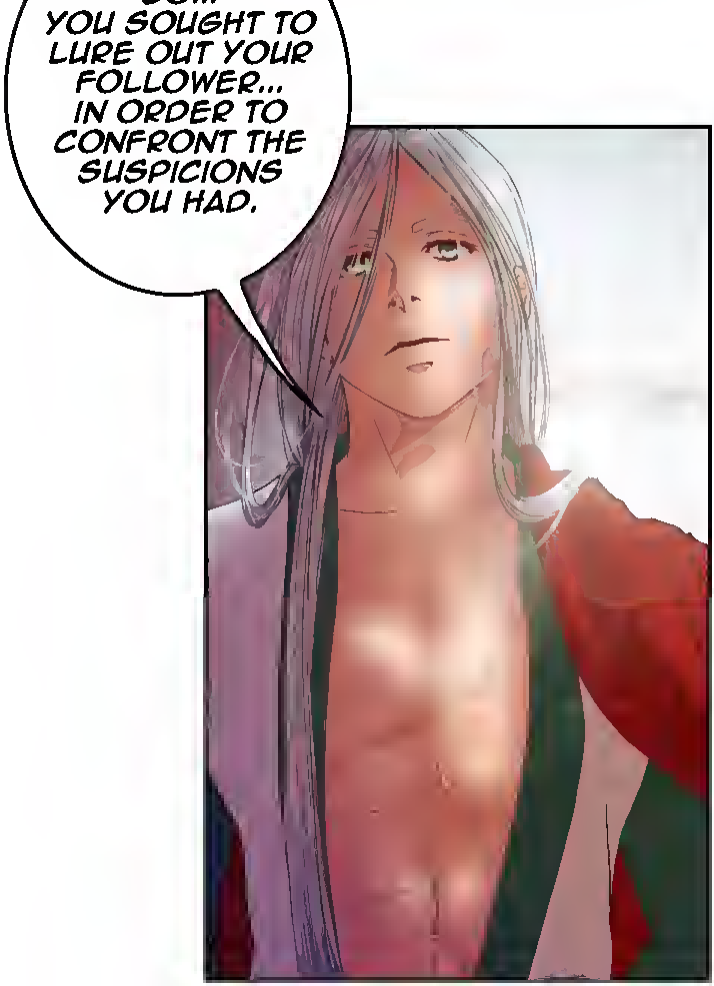
YES... ALTHOUGH I DIDN'T REALLY PLAN TO CAUSE A STIR IN TOWN...

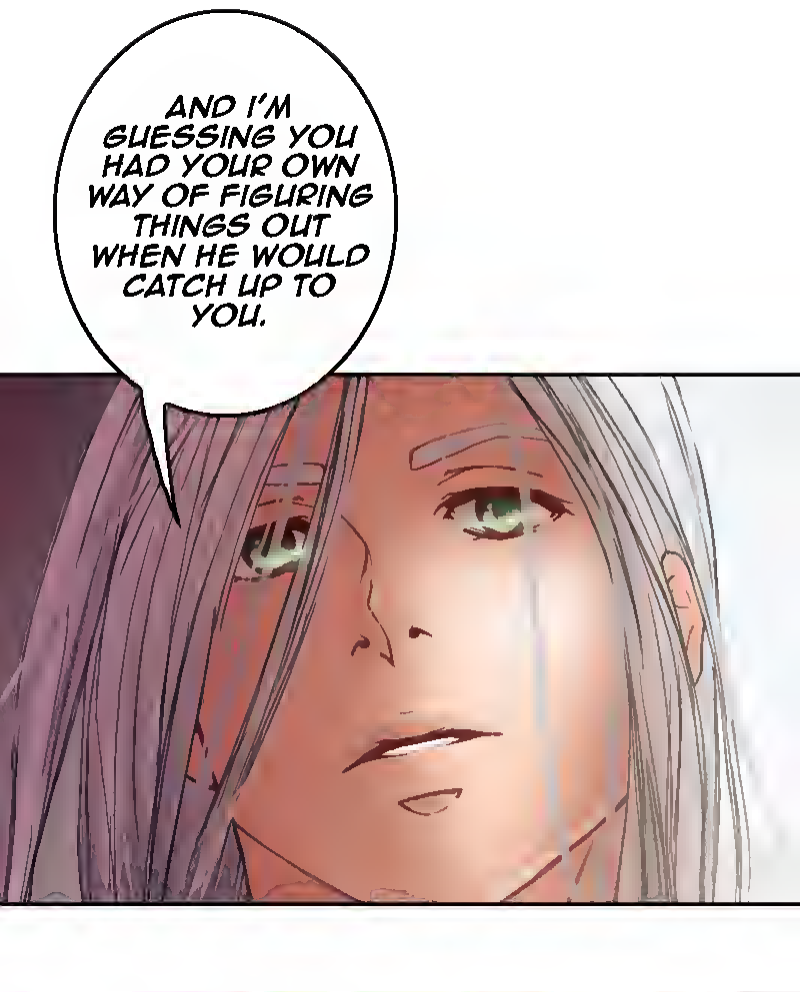


...IT WAS A CALCULATED RISK I HAD TO TAKE TO CONFIRM MY DOUBTS.

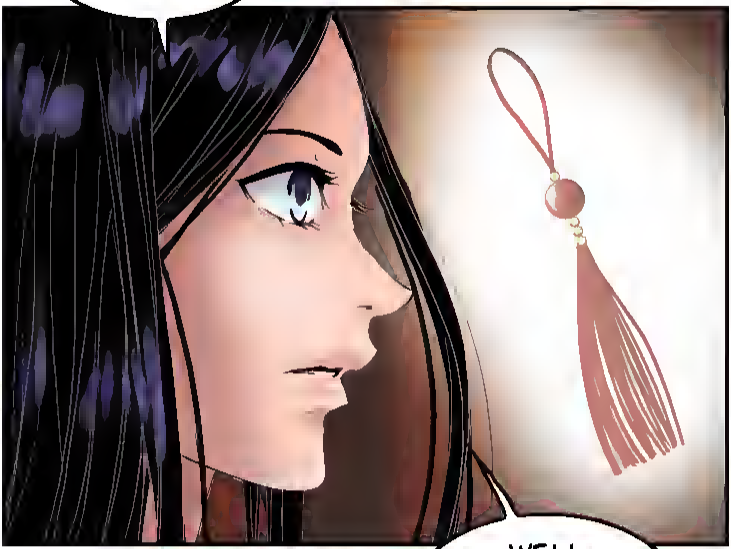
I DIDN'T PLAN TO FIGHT, BUT I DID PLAN TO LEAD A CHASE.

SO...

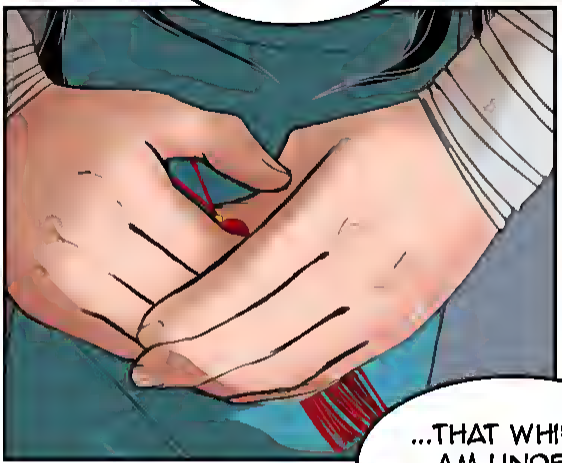

YOU SOUGHT TO LURE OUT YOUR FOLLOWER... IN ORDER TO CONFRONT THE SUSPICIONS YOU HAD.


AND I'M GUESSING YOU HAD YOUR OWN WAY OF FIGURING THINGS OUT WHEN HE WOULD CATCH UP TO YOU.

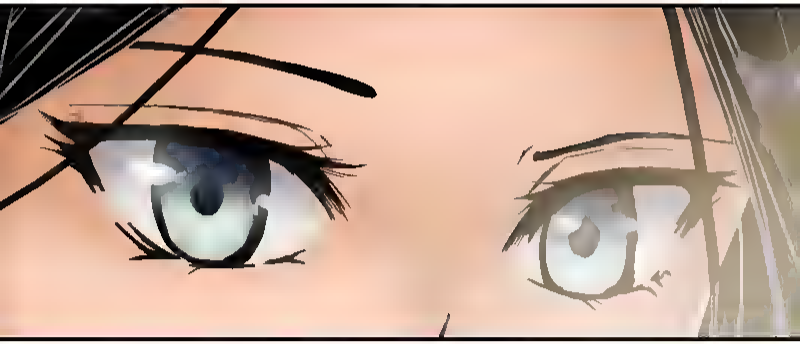
...



WELL, PERHAPS... I DID HAVE A THEORY...

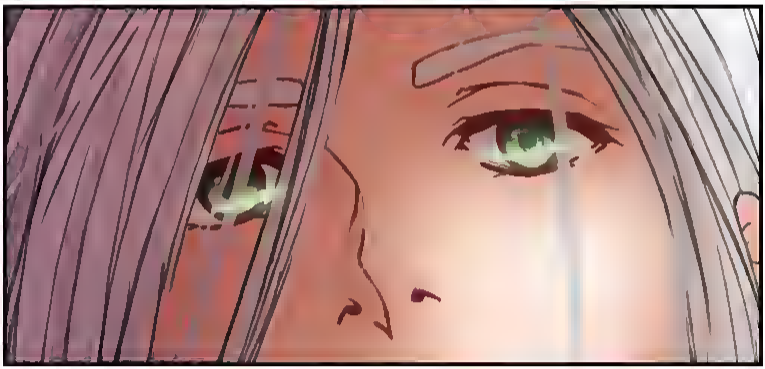

...BUT AT THIS POINT, I CAN SEE NOW...
...THAT WHILE I AM UNDER PROTECTION...
...THAT MAY NOT BE ALL THERE IS CONCERNING ME.

POSSIBLY
...

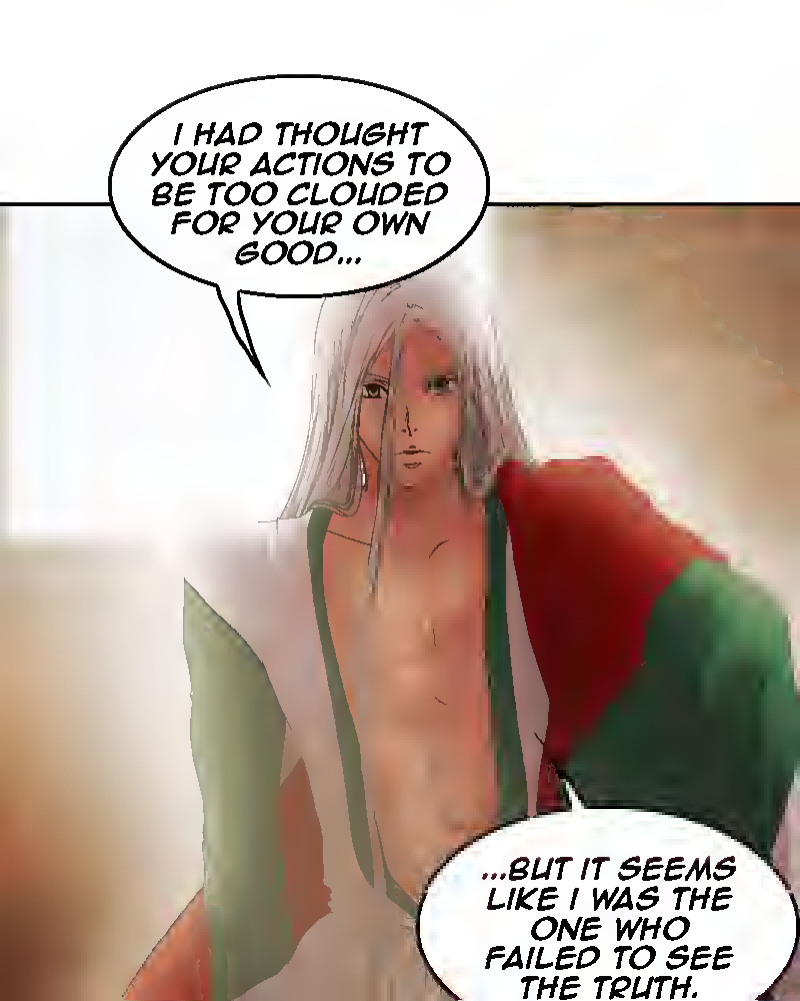


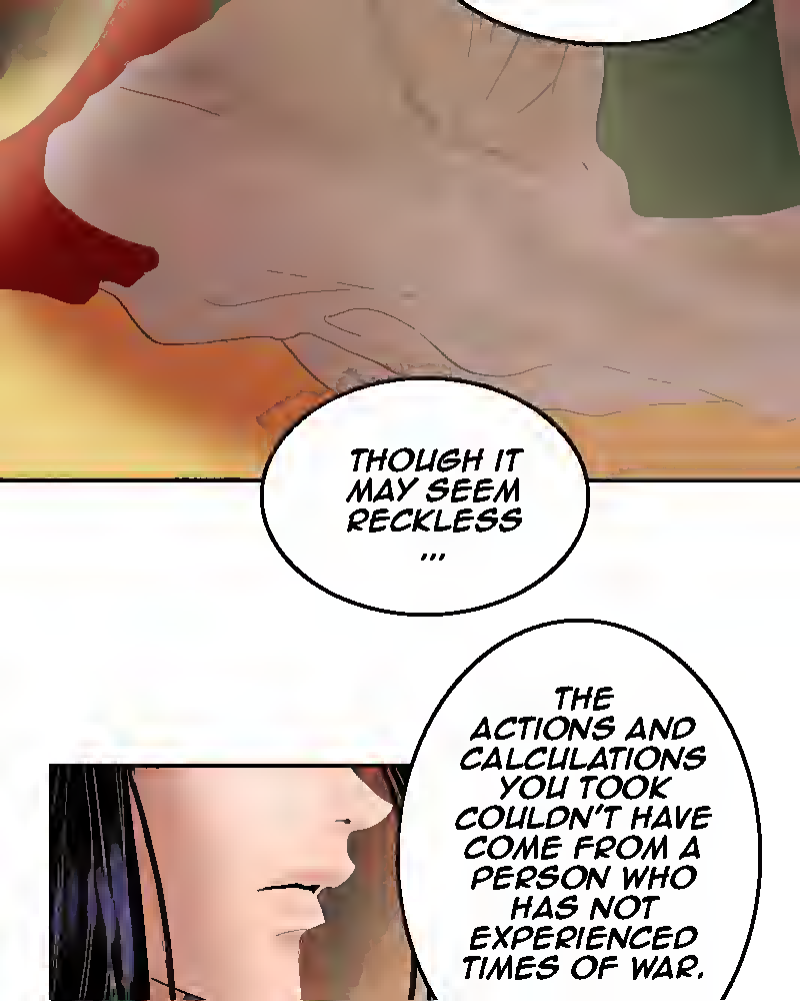
...THERE IS A

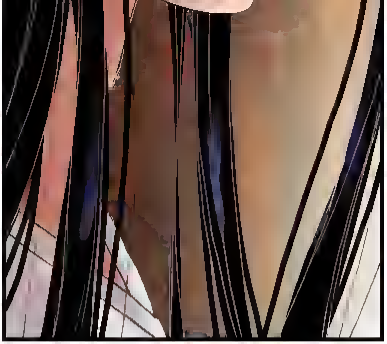
CONFLICT OF INTEREST WITHIN THE PALACE REGARDING ME.



HMPH.

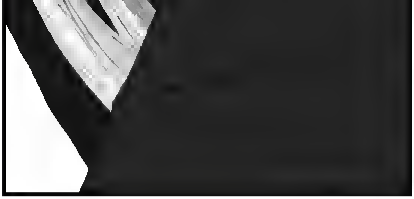

I HAD THOUGHT YOUR ACTIONS TO BE TOO CLOUDED FOR YOUR OWN GOOD...
...BUT IT SEEMS LIKE I WAS THE ONE WHO FAILED TO SEE THE TRUTH.


THOUGH IT MAY SEEM RECKLESS ...
THE ACTIONS AND CALCULATIONS YOU TOOK COULDN'T HAVE COME FROM A PERSON WHO HAS NOT EXPERIENCED TIMES OF WAR.

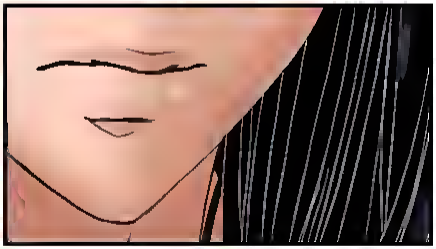


AND ALSO, IT SEEMED LIKE YOU HAD STRENGTH TO TAKE DOWN THOSE MEN WITH EASE.

...BUT YOU KEPT YOUR EYES ON THE BIGGER GOAL.



...AS WELL AS ALSO ACCOMPLISHING YOUR MOTIVES IN SAVING THE WOMAN IN NEED.

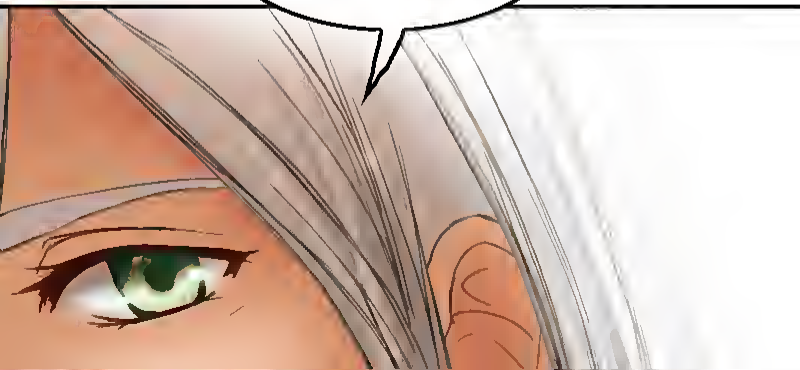


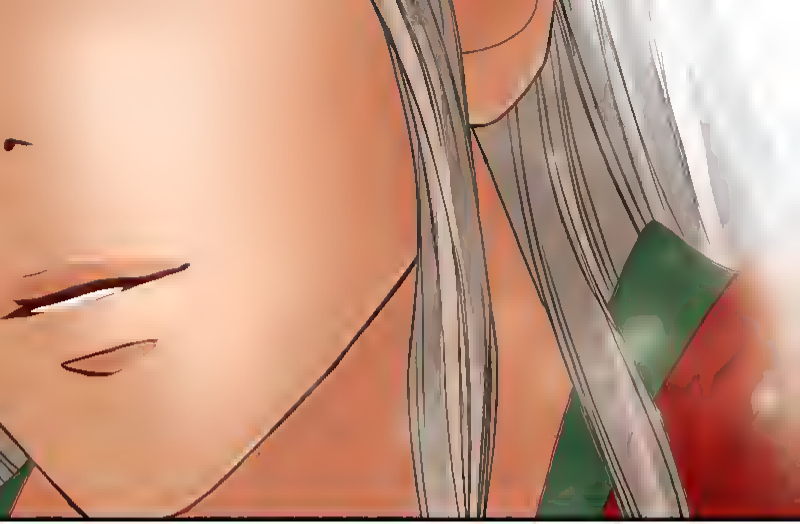
IN A WAY,

I REALIZED MY STRENGTH MAY HAVE CAUSED ME TO BE OVER-CONFIDENT.

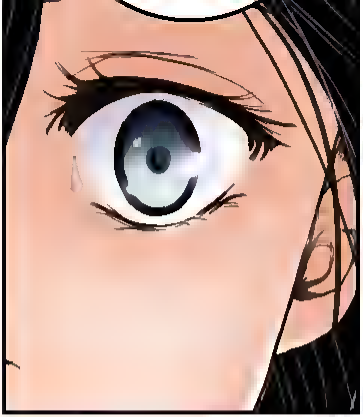
I NOW KNOW THAT I NEED TO SEE WHERE I STAND CLEARLY BEFORE MAKING DECISIONS.

PERHAPS... BUT YOU SEE...



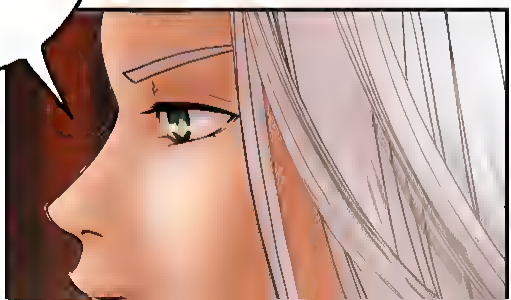


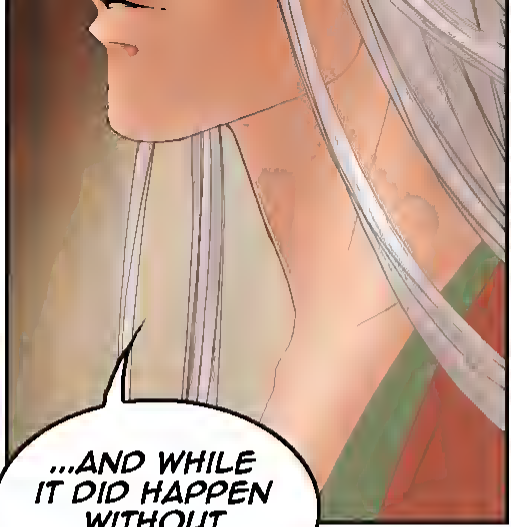
I WAS NOT THE ONLY PERSON WHO WAS WATCHING AFTER YOU.



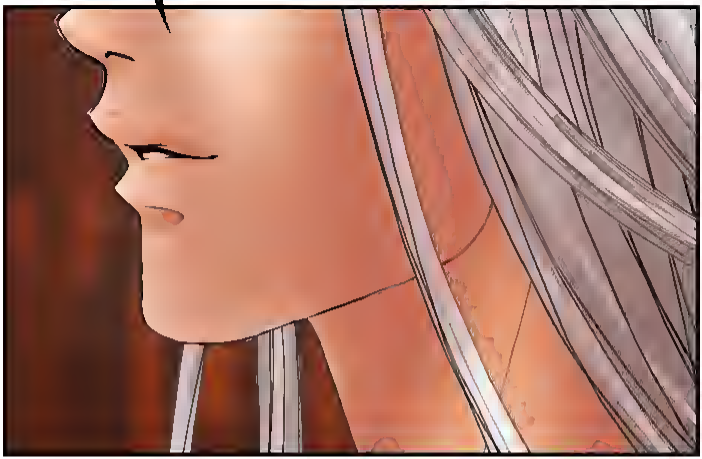
YOU SEE...

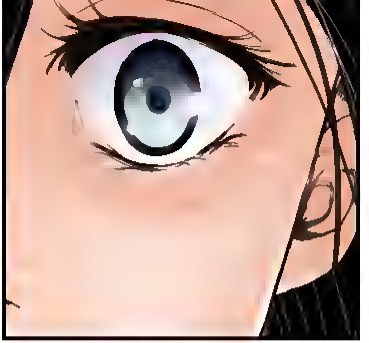
THERE WERE TWO MORE OF MY MEN FOLLOWING YOU.





...IT CAME TO A SITUATION WHERE I HAD TO INTERVENE MYSELF.





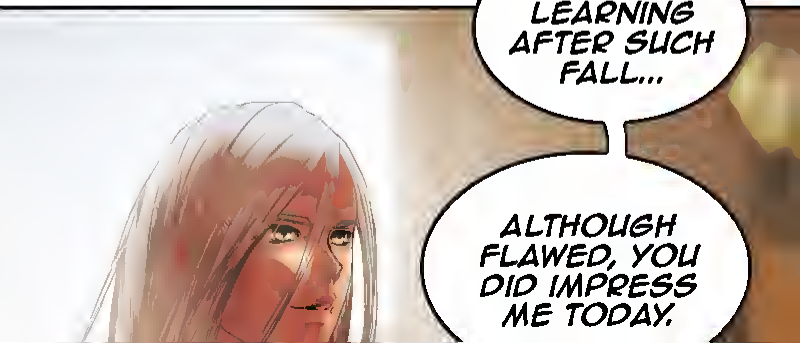
YOU SEE, MEI... WHILE IT IS IMPORTANT NOT TO UNDERESTIMATE OTHERS...

...IT IS JUST AS IMPORTANT TO NOT UNDERESTIMATE YOURSELF EITHER.

STRENGTH...

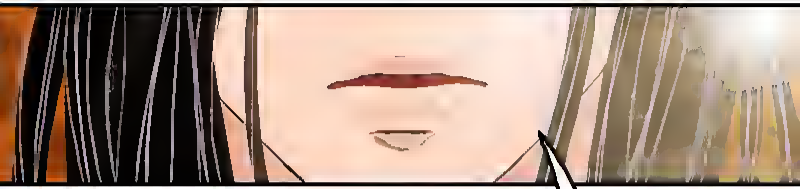
DETERMINATION...

AND EVEN LEARNING AFTER SUCH FALL...



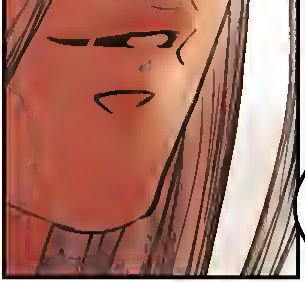
ALTHOUGH FLAWED, YOU DID IMPRESS ME TODAY.

...



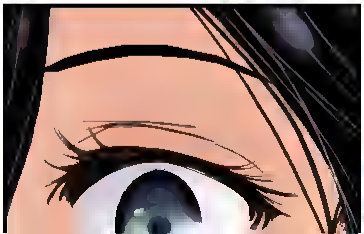
SO...
DO I HAVE THE PLEASURE OF KNOWING WHOM I HAVE IMPRESSED?

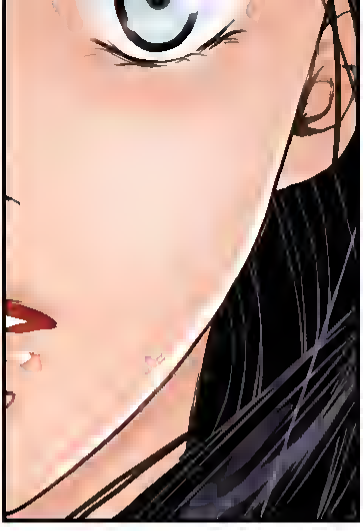
WELL, YOU COULD MAKE ME TALK WITH THAT "SEAL" YOU HAVE...



BUT FOR NOW, LET'S JUST SAY...

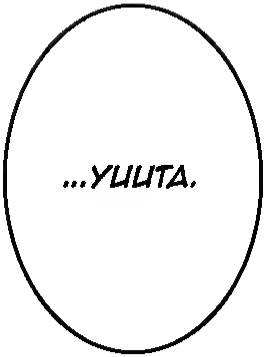
...I'LL BE PUTTING IN A FEW GOOD WORDS FOR TO THE KING.

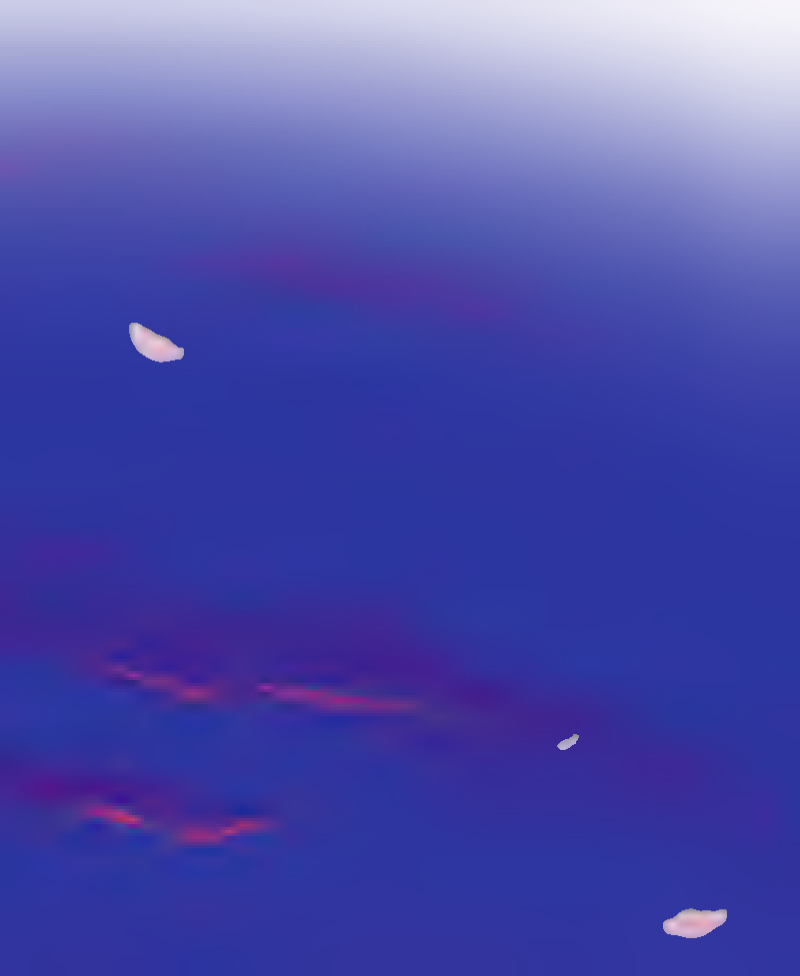




I SHOULD HEAD OUT.
HAVE A PLEASANT EVENING, MEI.

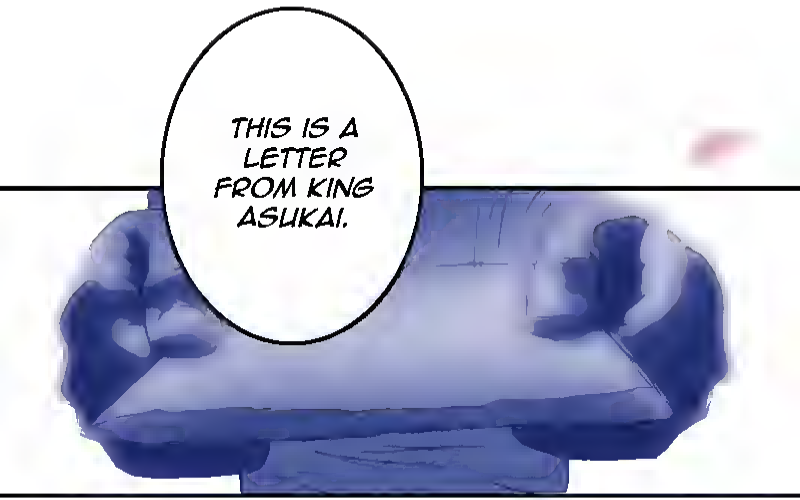
ONE MOMENT...
...I DIDN'T CATCH YOUR NAME.


...YUUTA.



MISS KIHARA MEI?

YES?
GOOD. CAUGHT YOU IN TIME.
MR. FUJIOKA SAID YOU'D GONE INTO TOWN.


THIS IS A LETTER FROM KING ASUKAI.

IT'S AN INVITATION TO DINE WITH HIM THIS EVENING.

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